

# Understanding the Language of Historic Preservation

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When reading about and working with historic resources, it's important to recognize words and phrases that are often used. Understanding their meaning is important when working with concepts and guidelines regarding historic preservation projects and programs.

## Preservation Terms

### Historic Significance

Resources are evaluated for historic significance using criteria that were developed in connection with listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Those criteria are as follows: "The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

- A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. That are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C. That embody the a) distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or b) that represent the work of a master, or c) that possess high artistic values, or d) that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. That have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history."

Most Kentucky communities have historic resources that fall into all four categories listed above.

### Historic Integrity

This refers to how legitimate or authentic the historic identity is. This can be evaluated by the survival of physical

features that existed during the property's most important period of time. The National Register program looks at seven qualities when considering the integrity of a property or building: location, setting, feeling, association, design, workmanship, and materials.

Consider how much of the historically significant materials, features, and characteristics of the property still exist. Inspect the property to see how much of the historic fabric is still intact. Historic building fabric includes features (porches, windows, stairways, trim, entrances, porches, windows) and materials (wood, stone, brick, plaster). Historic landscape features, such as roads, fences, and vegetation, may also be evaluated.

When a building or resource has a good deal of authentic historic fabric, the integrity is generally considered high. When there is little of the historic fabric remaining, integrity is generally low. Retaining the integrity of a building or resource is important for preservation efforts.

**Note:** Changes to a building may have been made over a period of time. This often means that there is a mixture of style elements. These additions and alterations are a part of the history of the building and often contribute to its story and significance. It provides a visual record of the changing ownership, values, and events throughout time.

### Authenticity

To be considered authentic, a property should incorporate a substantial amount of the original features and materials.

### Condition vs. Integrity

Condition and integrity are two different but related concepts. The integrity of an historic building or resource refers to the presence of authentic materials and features. The condition of the building or resource concerns its appearance, structural soundness, and maintenance over time.

## **Preservation Treatments**

### ***Preservation***

The act or process of using measures necessary to sustain the existing form, integrity, and materials of a historic property. The work focuses upon the ongoing maintenance and repair of historic materials and features rather than replacement and new construction.

### ***Rehabilitation***

The act or process of adapting or reusing a historic property to a new use. This may involve repairs, alterations, and additions while still preserving portions or features that express its historic, cultural, or architectural values. Adaptive reuse allows historic buildings to survive into the present and future use by finding appropriate and viable new uses for them.

### ***Restoration***

Process of accurately depicting the form, features, and character of a property as it appeared at a particular point in time. May involve removal of features from other periods in its history and the reconstruction of missing features from the restoration period. Restoration is a relatively rare action calling for significant amounts of research and funding. Many “restoration” projects should actually be called rehabilitation.

### ***Stabilization***

This is a temporary treatment meant to preserve a resource or element until more permanent work can be completed. Stabilization process refers to the application of actions designed to re-establish a weather-resistant enclosure and structural stability while still maintaining the essential form and features. Examples of temporary stabilization might include propping up a sagging porch, covering a window opening with plywood, or covering a deteriorating roof of a historic building.

### ***Reconstruction***

The act or process of precisely duplicating through new construction the form, features, and detailing of a structure or object to its appearance at a certain period of time and place. The reconstruction of historic resources is rarely undertaken and should only be done when detailed physical and documentary evidence is available for accurate re-creation.

## **Reference**

Kentucky Historic Façade Rehabilitation Guidelines. Prepared by John Milner Associates Inc. and Sponsored by the Kentucky Heritage Council and the Renaissance Kentucky Alliance. September 2003.